

**THE CHURCH OF THE PANAGIA TOU ARAKOS, LAGOUDERA:  
FIRST PRELIMINARY REPORT, 1968**

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with an Appendix by

CYRIL MANGO

IN April, 1968, a Dumbarton Oaks expedition began work on the cleaning and conservation of wall paintings in the church of the Panagia tou Arakos near Lagoudera in Cyprus. The work is being carried out with the kind permission and cooperation of His Grace the Bishop of Kyrenia and the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus. Dumbarton Oaks wishes to take this opportunity to acknowledge its debt to Dr. V. Karageorghis, the Director of Antiquities, and to Mr. A. Papageorgiou, the Curator of Monuments. For the duration of the work the diocese of Kyrenia has generously placed at the disposal of the expedition the newly restored monastery building. Particular thanks are due Mr. Polycarpus Joannides, the Diocesan Secretary, for his understanding and help. There are many practical problems arising at the start of work in a remote place, and in dealing with these the expedition has been very glad of the assistance of Mr. A. Orphanou, Chief Foreman to the Department of Antiquities. The writer is acting as Field Director for Dumbarton Oaks, with the skilled assistance of Mr. Kostas Zaferiades of the Dumbarton Oaks field staff.

The church of the Panagia tou Arakos is situated on the northeastern slopes of Madari, the second highest summit in the Troodos range. It is at a height of about three thousand feet and stands alone by the side of the new road, about half way between the villages of Lagoudera and Sarandi. The history of the church, with the exception of the information contained in the three inscriptions referred to below, is almost entirely unknown. The first inscription is in the interior of the church over the north door. The second, likewise in the interior, accompanies a painting of the Virgin and Child on the south wall.

These have been published by A. Steel,<sup>1</sup> W. H. and G. Buckler,<sup>2</sup> G. A. Soteriou,<sup>3</sup> and by Mr. and Mrs. A. Stylianou.<sup>4</sup> They tell us that the church was painted in the year 1192 at the behest of a certain Leo surnamed *Authentou*, but they do not give us a date for the building of the church, nor do we know whether it was a monastery, a private chapel, or a village church. The Byzantine township of Lagoudera, which seems to have been a more considerable settlement than the present village, is about two kilometers below the present village and three kilometers from the church of Our Lady of Arakos, so that it is very likely that the church was either a private one or that it served a monastery. The third inscription over the exterior of the north door is published by Professor Mango. in an Appendix to this article. A fourth piece of information comes to us from the Russian monk Barskij, who visited the monastery in 1735<sup>5</sup> and whose pencilled signature is still to be seen on the painting of Saint Stephen the Protomartyr in the sanctuary. At the time of Barskij's visit the church formed part of a monastery and from the sketch of the buildings drawn by him it can be seen that it looked then much as it does today.

<sup>1</sup> In *Illustrated London News* (Feb. 6, 1937), 215.

<sup>2</sup> "Dated Wall Paintings in Cyprus," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, VII, (1939-44), 48 ff.

<sup>3</sup> "Θεοτόκος ἡ Ἀρακιώτισσα τῆς Κύπρου," *Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἐφημερὶς* (1953/4), pt. 1, 87 f.

<sup>4</sup> A. and J. Stylianou, "Donors and Dedicatory Inscriptions, Supplicants and Supplications in the Painted Churches of Cyprus," *Jahrbuch der Oesterreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft*, IX (1960), 101.

<sup>5</sup> *Stranstvovaniia Vasilja Grigoroviča-Barskago*, ed. N. Barsukov, II (St. Petersburg, 1886), 301-303. Greek trans. A. Stylianou, *Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαί*, XXI (1957), 93-95, pl. 28.

The first inscription of 1192 is under a painting of the imprint of Christ's face upon the Holy Tile. This painting and the lettering are in the same style as all the other paintings of the naos and the sanctuary. The paintings of the apse, however, are by a different master whose work is characterized by bold and more simplified lines. It is too soon to say whether or not there may be a difference of date between the two masters, but we shall hope to throw further light upon the problem when cleaning and conservation work are carried out in the apse.

The inscription around the tympanum over the exterior of the north door is of interest since it is associated with the bust of the Mother of God Panachrantos which is in the tympanum (figs. 8, 9). The style of this painting and the letter forms link it with the fragmentary paintings which were on the east wall of the narthex, and with a certain amount of repainting in the ground register of the naos. All of this work is in its turn so similar to the work of 1333 at Asinou as to leave little doubt that it was executed by the same painters. It will be possible to be more certain of these matters only after cleaning has been carried out, but, if the assumption is correct, the painting over the north door gives us the name Leo or Leontios for the painter at Asinou, while Asinou gives us a date in the fourteenth century for some redecoration at Lagoudera.

The work on the cleaning and conservation of the paintings has begun in the dome and by the end of the year had progressed down into the drum where there are twelve standing figures of prophets between the windows (figs. 6, 7). The paintings are for the most part in good condition, but four factors have been instrumental in damaging them:

First; the use of candles and oil lamps over the centuries has obscured the paintings with a layer of grime and soot. While their iconography can still be determined in this be-

smirched state, the paintings themselves lack all of their pristine vitality and brilliance of color.

Second; the plaster on which the paintings were made is composed of lime with a straw or chaff binding material, and in the awkward curved surfaces of the dome an extra large amount of binding material was added to the lime in order to strengthen its adherence to the masonry. This measure was successful from the point of view of achieving a secure plaster ground, and after nearly eight hundred years it is still as solid as when it was made, but wherever the chaff is on the surface of the plaster, the paint has flaked off, and this accounts for numerous small holes in the paint surface which must be repaired and colored in.

Third; for centuries clusters of bats have used the dome as their sleeping quarters, and their clinging claws have scored many small holes in the paint surface and plaster, while the rubbing of their bodies has left a greasy black film wherever they congregated. Finally, in the drum of the dome the windows must have been without glass for long periods, for wind and rain have eroded the paint and plaster of the figures of the prophets between the windows; in addition, the non-eroded paint surfaces are frequently covered by an efflorescence of calcium salts.

It is too early to make any general appraisal of the paintings, but a few interesting details about them have already become apparent.

The plaster ground for the painting conforms to the standard Byzantine practice in being rendered in sections which the painters could bring near to a finished state before the plaster was too dry. Thus, the Pantocrator of the dome (figs. 1, 2) is on a single rendering, the roundels of the angels are on two renderings, and the prophets of the drum are on three. The horizontal joins run along the decorative border between the Pantocrator and the angels, and along the red border between the angels and the prophets. There is some evidence to show that the painter actually trowelled into the plaster the general outlines of his composition. This is the case with the halo of the Pantocrator (figs. 3, 4), the circles of the roundels with angels, and the outlines of the bodies of the angels. This trowelling of the

<sup>6</sup> Illustrations of some of the paintings have appeared in various publications, but the only more comprehensive treatment of them has been by A. Stylianou, "Αἱ τοιχογραφίαι τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Παναγίας τοῦ Ἀράκου," *Πεπραγμένα τοῦ Θ' Διεθνoῦς Βυζαντιν. Συνεδρίου*, I (Athens, 1955), 459 ff., and by A. and J. Stylianou, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus* (London, 1964), 70 ff.

general shapes of the composition is evidence of a very competent and confident master painter, who knew at once where and how large he wanted his figures to be and who could dispense with the necessity of incising his preliminary drawings into the plaster. Furthermore there is evidence that the plaster was to some extent still workable near the time when he was finishing his painting. The hands of the Pantocrator and the hands and faces of the angels all show signs of having been retrowelled before they were painted. Flesh colors were the last parts of his subject to be executed by a Byzantine wall painter, which explains why the colors of the finished clothing around the hands appear to have been disturbed by this trowelling. Only further examination and study will confirm the accuracy of this observation, but if correct, it is of some importance, since it shows that the master at least of the dome paintings at Lagoudera had reached the final stage of his paintings while the plaster was still fresh.

Black is used to outline haloes and for the broad outline for the loros of the imperial costumes worn by some angels (fig. 5). In many places there are no brush marks in the black and it has a smooth, shiny finish which must mean that the color was somehow impressed into the plaster. This may indicate that we have here an example of the polishing process which Dionysios of Fourni recommends, although the meaning of his instruction is not entirely clear.<sup>7</sup>

The white color used for the painted pearls has a slightly opalescent appearance, and the round blobs stand out in relatively high relief. The red of the background for the Pantocrator and of some of the angel backgrounds and costumes was originally very bright and it seems unlikely that it was an earth red. Analysis will confirm the nature of it, but the blackening of some of the areas suggests that the painter may have used vermilion, which is liable to change from the red to black sulphide of mercury when it is

used on lime plasters.<sup>8</sup> Such a lavish use of vermilion would be unusual in the twelfth century, and implies a very wealthy patron; indeed, the general impression to be gained from the paintings of Lagoudera is that they were deprived of nothing in terms of skillful artists, fine materials, and adequate time for execution.

David C. Winfield

#### APPENDIX

The painted inscription in the lunette above the north door of the church forms a semicircular band round the bust of the Mother of God Panachrantos (fig. 8). The text, which to my knowledge has not been published before, is as follows:

† "Ηχώ εὐλαλλο προδειάγονῦς Ἀμβα-  
κούμ ἀραρώτος ἐκ σοῦ Παρθένε Λόγου τὴν  
σάρκοσιν καὶ κόσμῳς λελίτρωτε τις ἀρχε-  
γόνου ἀρας: εὐχαισε τῷ γράψαντι τὴν δέλ-  
των ταύτην Λεωντ . . . κονῶν ἀμην

With regard to the missing part, there can be little doubt that the penultimate word should be completed διακόνου, even if this is in the wrong case. We are thus left to choose between Λέωντος (sic) and Λεωντίου: the second alternative appears the more likely because above the missing letter following the *tau* is a sign that looks like a rough breathing, but may have been meant as an accent (fig. 9, top right corner).<sup>9</sup> In conventional spelling the text may now be restored as follows:

† "Ηχώ εὐλάλω προδιαγόνους Ἀμβα-  
κούμ ἀραρότως ἐκ σοῦ, Παρθένε, Λόγου  
τὴν σάρκωσιν καὶ κόσμος λελύτρωται τῆς  
ἀρχεγόνου ἀρᾶς. Εὐχεσσαι<sup>10</sup> τῷ γράψαντι  
τὴν δέλτον ταύτην Λεοντ[ίου δια]κόνου.  
Ἀμήν.

Translation: "With a clear sound Habakkuk firmly foretold the Incarnation of the Logos through thee, O Virgin, and [so] the world

<sup>8</sup> D. V. Thompson, *The Materials of Medieval Painting* (London, 1936), 103–108.

<sup>7</sup> Dionysios of Fourni, *Ἑρμηνεία τῆς ὤγραφικῆς τέχνης*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (St. Petersburg, 1909), 38–39. M. Didron, *Manuel d'iconographie chrétienne* (Paris, 1845), 58. For a discussion of the polishing process, see D. C. Winfield, "Byzantine Wall Painting Methods," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 22, (1968), 87–90.

<sup>9</sup> The spelling and accentuation of the inscription are, however, so erratic that no certain conclusion can be drawn. Cf. the accentuation of the same name accompanying a donor portrait in the narthex of Asinou which Mr. Winfield attributes to the same hand: Δέ(ησις) του δούλου του Θε(εο)υ Λαιώντιου.

<sup>10</sup> Perhaps for εὐχεσθε.

has been delivered of its original curse. Pray for him who has written this tablet,<sup>11</sup> Leontius the deacon. Amen."

The first part of the inscription is excerpted from a *heirmos* by George Sikeliotēs (seventh or eighth century) of which the published version runs as follows:

Ἦχος εὐλόλῳ  
προδιαγνοὺς Ἀββακοῦμ  
ἀραρότου (sic) Λόγου τὴν σάρκωσιν  
κέκραγεν ἀναφανδόν·  
ἀκοὴν ἀκήκοα θείας βουλήσεως·  
Θεὸς γὰρ ἀτρέπτως τοῖς βροτοῖς ὁμι-  
λήσει

<sup>11</sup> The formula, which must have been copied from the colophon of a manuscript, is unsuitable for a wall painting.

ἐξ ὄρους ἐρχόμενος  
παρθενικῆς ἐκ γαστροῦ  
καὶ κόσμον λυτρούμενος  
τῆς ἀρχεγόνου ἀρᾶς.<sup>12</sup>

In line 3 ἀραρότως, as in our inscription, would make better sense.

Palaeographically, our inscription is extremely close to the one, dated 1333, in the narthex of Asinou as well as to other inscriptions of the same period in the latter church. This confirms Mr. Winfield's suggestion that the same painter worked in both churches.

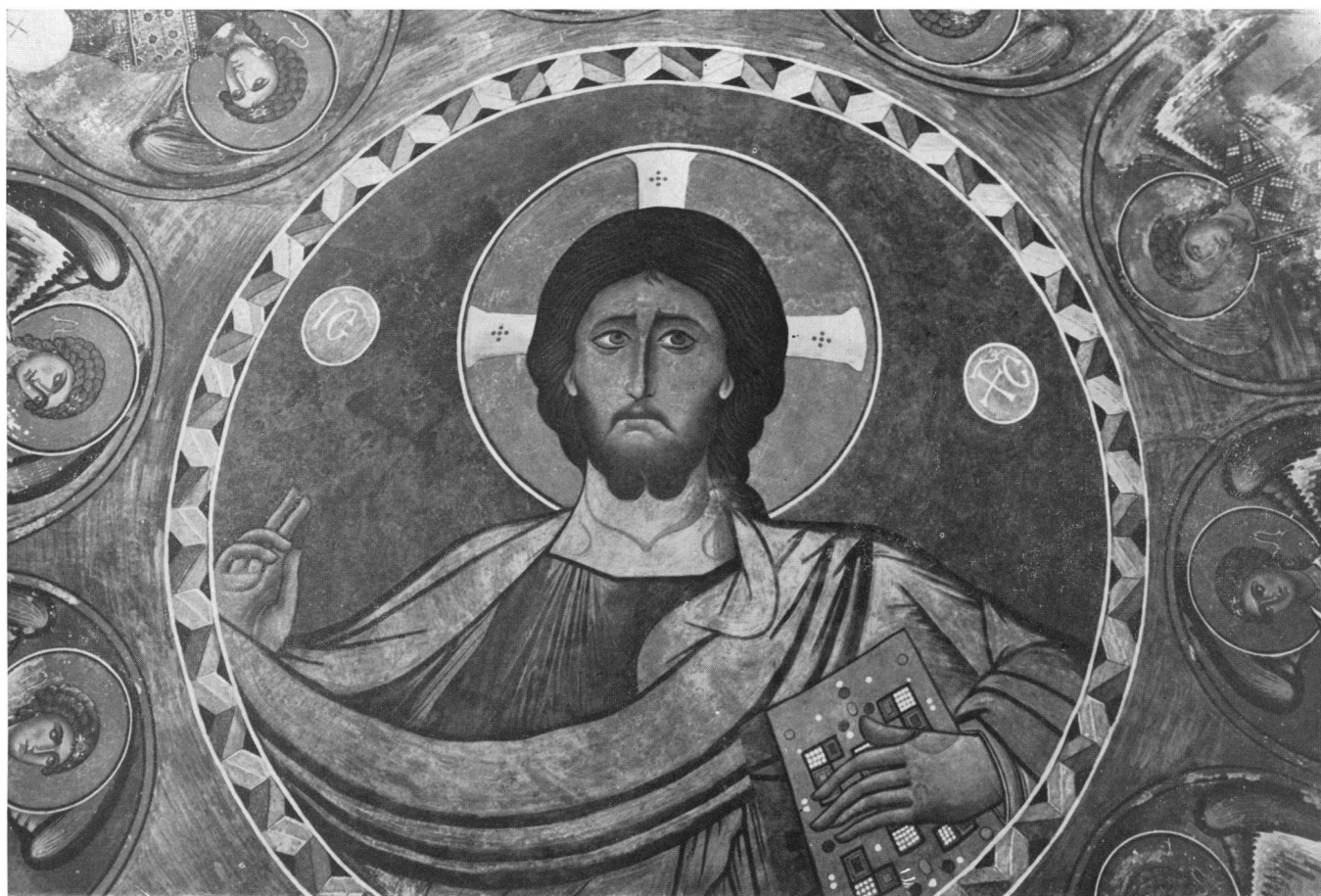
*Cyril Mango*

<sup>12</sup> Εἰρηολόγιον, ed. Sophronios Eustratiades (Chennevières-sur-Marne, 1932), 111, No. 154.





1. Before cleaning



2. After cleaning and conservation  
The Pantocrator  
Lagoudera, Panagia tou Arakos, Dome



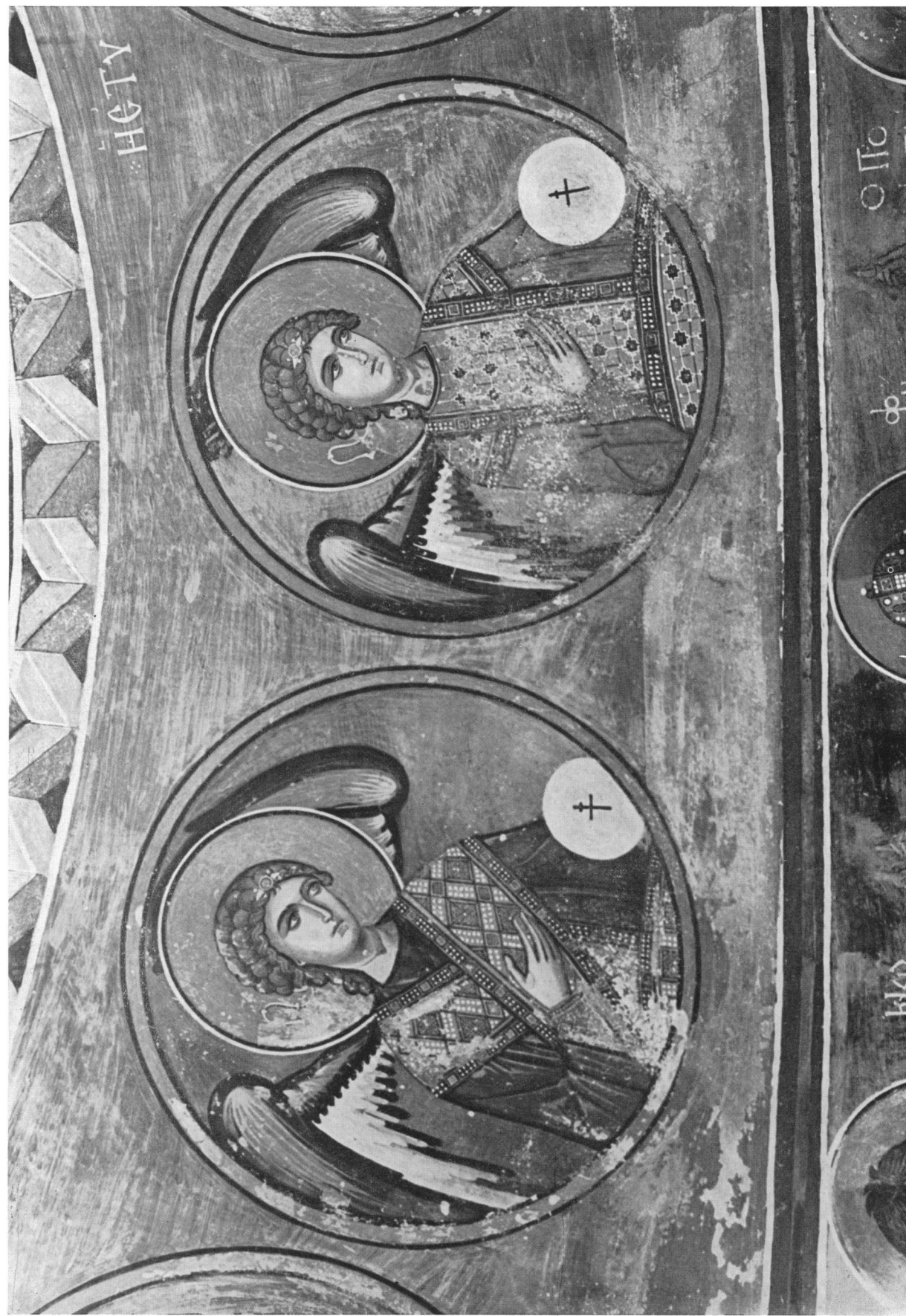
3. Before cleaning



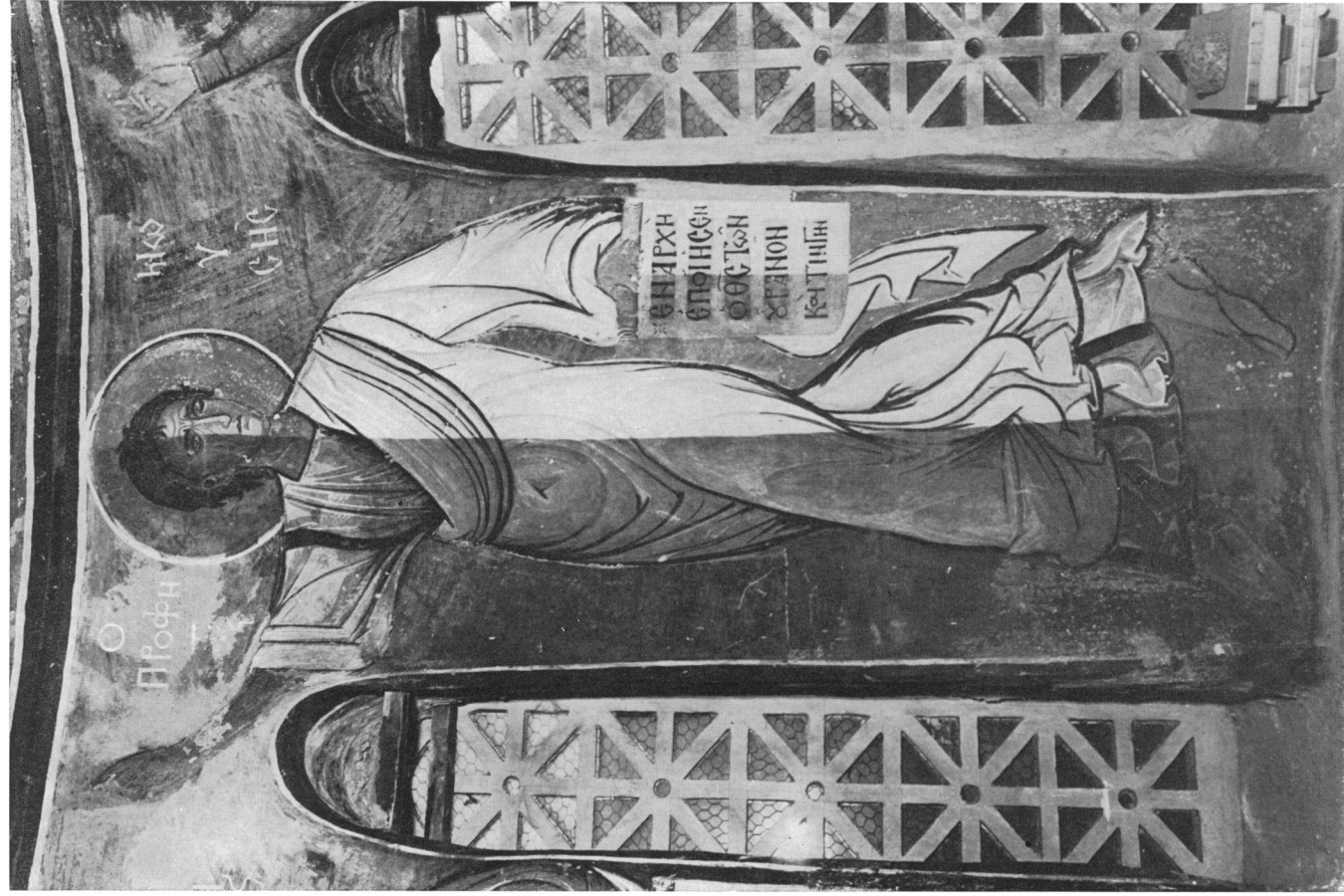
4. After cleaning and conservation.  
Note how cleaning removes softness and restores original clarity of line.

Head of Pantocrator





5. Lagoudera, Panagia tou Arakos. Two Archangels in Roundels beneath Pantocrator  
(after cleaning but before toning in of Damaged Areas).



6. The Prophet Moses (half cleaned)



7. The Prophet Jonah (half cleaned)

Lagoudera, Panagia tou Arakos





8.



9. Detail of Inscription, with Name of Painter

Exterior Lunette above North Door  
Lagoudera, Panagia tou Arakos